

# WHO'S GUILTY?

by MRS. WILSON WOODROW

AUTHOR OF "THE SILVER BUTTERFLY,"  
"SALLY SALT," "THE BLACK PEARL," ETC.

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## ELEVENTH STORY

### The Lost Paradise.

The first part of the strange real-life romance of Tom Mercer and Janet Gordon was more or less like that of an old-time English melodrama. But the latter and more tensely exciting part of it was like no other story ever told since the birth of time.

They were brought up together, Tom and Janet, in the historic little village of Samoset, on the very edge of the creek that formed the borderline between New York and Connecticut.

The village itself was on the New York side of the creek. But in two good strides and without setting wet above the knee, a man could easily step into Connecticut.

Hiram Gordon—Janet's father—was the "big man" of Samoset. His house was the most pretentious, his lands the broadest in the little community.

He and Tom Mercer's father had been chums from their college days. And Tom and his sister Miriam were ever welcome guests in the big Gordon house. Since the death of their parents the two Mercer children had been all but adopted by Hiram Gordon.

Miriam Mercer was a prim, unattractive girl with a sharp tongue and an oddly sourd nature. Gordon's influence had secured for her the position of principal of the Samoset grammar school. And she spent most of her time at her duties there, growing more and more aloof from her old friends. From the first, she had disliked Janet Gordon and had vainly tried to influence Tom against her.

As for Tom, himself—from childhood he and Janet had loved each other. Their fathers had smiled on the pretty romance. And when, in young manhood, Tom asked Hiram Gordon's permission to marry Janet, the request was heartily granted.

The course of true love gave every promise of running with a most unusual smoothness, flawed only by Miriam Mercer's sour and futile opposition.

Hiram Gordon was the president and chief stockholder of the Samoset bank. Tom had a position of trust under him and on the first of the year was to succeed the retiring old cashier. This would mean for him an income on which he and Janet could very comfortably marry.

Then, all at once, the placid, uneventful happiness of the two lovers received a sharp setback.

A fever of stock speculation had swept the country, as reaction after an era of hard times. Hiram Gordon was infected by it. He saw—or thought he saw—a chance to turn his comfortable fortune into enormous wealth.

He speculated heavily, not only with his personal funds, but with those of the bank as well. And presently came the collapse of the bubble of false prosperity that had burst so many thousand people into crazy investments. Panic reigned in Wall street. Dozens of banks were wrecked. And, with an army of other unfortunate, Hiram A. Gordon lost his all.

C. M. Gordon could have faced the loss of his own fortune. But the fact that thousands of people had been impoverished by his folly was more than a cold heart.

He made a hurried trip to New York, trying to raise funds to cover his losses. He found the New York market tight closed and he could not wring from it a single dollar.

But through a broad street broker he chance to meet there, a young financier named Marc Lander, who had fallen on the panic that had ruined so many better men.

Lander had a reputation that was none too clean. He had made his wealth by cleverly gambling on "long shots" in the financial world. And he

at all. But I could see how happy it would make you to marry Mr. Gordon. We used to be invited very often to this apartment. And this evening we go to New York to see.

Tom's face was pale again. It seemed as if he had just come from a long walk—and that I had been away for hours—and even though he was still another man's wife, he was still another man's wife.

"You?" he cried in alarm. "A failure? Never in this case, never in this case."

"I am so happy! So happy!" Tom said again.

"The last time I saw you, Tom, you were white and haggard. Across the breakfast table he met his sister Miriam's gaze indignantly triumphant. Miriam, too, had just received a letter from Samoset. And she cried in shrill delight.

"What do you think, Tom? Janet Gordon was married yesterday?"

Married a rich man from New York. Throw you over for a man with more cash and better looks and city ways. I am sure you dear, dear Tom, are wrong."

"I am wrong? No, I am right. My duty was to father. Help me to be honest."

JANET

"Your surroundings here are gorgeous," he said shakily. "But you're unhappy. Watched always. What is the matter? Tell me, Janet."

"Oh, Tom!" she wailed, tears gushing to the big, sad eyes. "I am so unhappy! So miserable! I'm such a failure."

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marvelled at him for an instant, then started:

"Your out of here!"

He leaped up a riding crop that had been left lying on a nearby table, and dashed violently at Tom's face.

Tom with his right hand caught the riding crop's blade and wrenches the crop from his grasp. At the same time he struck Miriam's nose and accidentally with his left.

She knew caught. Marc Lander suddenly on the point of the paw. The blackguard collapsed with a groan.

Tom leaped over him saying in the same ominously cool voice:

"It may want any more you know where to get it. And if ever I hear of your maltreating Janet again you'll get it good and plenty, whether you want it or not. Remember that."

Without so much as another glance at the scurrying and sprawling man on the floor he left the apartment.

Slowly and raggedly Marc Lander got to his feet.

"Are you poor, bairly bairly?"

"The withers question taxawor him a fresh access of fits."

"Bairly?" he bellowed. "I'm not any where near as baith just as Mr. Thomas Mercer will be honored in show with bairly. Fit get him, fit take me last cast or send me to the chair?" fit got him!"

"Then?" she exclaimed, shocked by his coldness bairly. "He aint nothin' to defend. You attacked him."

"Shut up," he snarled. "And now that they kicked him out, you can go too. I'm sick of you, get out."

"I can't auroo out to New York, she mifht answer. "But in Connecticut, I'm a ground for disease. And—"

"Divorce me if you sleep too?" he snarled. "But I'll get him yet. And you too! Ell make you both wish you'd neither of you ever been born!"

Janet followed Tom Mercers advice in every particular. She went to Hartford.

Tom arranged with a business acquaintance to take Janet into his employ while she was learning seamanship.

Then, with new zest he threw himself into his own work. And for a week he and Janet sang little of each other.

At last Tom received word that he had been promoted to a high saluted post of the firms general office in New York. And the same week Janet's absence was dimmed.

The happy lovers hastened to Samoset, and there, in Hiram Gordon's home, they were married.

Thereafter went to New York Tom found a beautiful house in the suburbs, where he installed his bride.

And so the happy years went on. Their children were born in the couple. Their home life was perfect. Tom was rising faster and faster in the business world.

In fact he had ever been a tireless worker, so tireless that at last nature claimed her due from his years of service. And Tom was confined to his house for several weeks by a serious nervous breakdown.

Janet nursed him tenderly back toward health. But she was still far from satisfied with his condition. As partially was she troubled when the doctor one day drew her to one side and said:

"He is on the highroad to recovery now. But there is one thing you must look out for. That is his heart. They heart has been under a terrific strain throughout all these years of work and worry. This illness has left it weak. Any sudden shock or excitement might put it to rest."

The doctor did not finish his sentence. But Janet understood. And she was afraid.

That same afternoon she and Tom were sitting in the library the two children came in from school with their mother and began to play on the floor.

"The youngsters had heard their father's voice at the door. So now, while their mother was busily at work around them, they undertook to play "The Ballad of the Marquis" on the front steps.

The alluring game proved somewhat noisy. And Janet feared lest it might distract Tom. So she slipped out upon the porch to tell the happy children to conduct their "battle" more quietly.

As she was about to re-enter the house, she saw a man turn in from the street and come up the walk toward her. Thinking it was some neighbor, Tom turned to his wife and said:

"I must tell you something about my husband. And Janet forced her to sit down to listen. Tom she slipped out upon the porch to tell the happy children to conduct their "battle" more quietly.

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## WOMAN EXPERT IN HOME EFFICIENCY FOR STEPHENS BILL

MRS. CHRISTINE FREDERICK SAYS IT WILL AID CONSUMERS.

## INSURES STANDARD QUALITY

Consumers in Small Towns and Rural Communities Are Victims of Discrimination by Big Store Methods, Which Encourage Substitution of Unidentified Goods at High Figures.

Mrs. Christine Frederick, household efficiency expert and consulting household editor of the Ladies' Home Journal, the New York Evening Sun, Success, Planning, and various other publications, recently appeared before the Insurance and Foreign Commerce Committee of the House of Representatives in Washington in support of the Stephens Ashurst bill. This measure, according to its title, is designed "to protect the public against dishonest advertising and false prices in manufacturing."

The bill will legislate standard uniform prices and prevent price cutting of highly marked goods by big city dealers for the purpose of getting the false impression that all their other wares are proportionately low. Price cutting is merely bait to lure buyers into the trap of inferior goods being substituted at high prices.

"I appear before the committee purely in the interest of the consumer," said Mrs. Frederick, "and I do not care about the rights or wrongs."



of the consumer except as far as what the consumer. There is no reason that the woman consumer, who spends one-half of the family income for clothes and for the home, should not furnish her with the least expensive and best quality of goods.

"I believe that a uniform price for all articles of clothing, which is the chief item by which this bill is concerned, can be obtained."

Mrs. Frederick declared that the measure of the Stephens Ashurst bill will result in greater household efficiency in buying for the following reasons:

First, it will help the consumer establish a standard in all purchases.

Second, it will guarantee to the consumer a continuance of those standards once they are established.

Third, it will give a wider distribution to various kinds of products that the consumer daily buys.

Fourth, it will save the consumer's money because the fixed price will guarantee a permanent, dependable supply of articles.

Fifth, it will be especially helpful to farm women and small town consumers who are now victims of discrimination.

Sixth, it will make it possible for the homemaker to practice more efficient and less wasteful buying methods.

Seventh, it will guarantee to the consumer that the goods which she buys are made under honorable standards of manufacture, fair pay and sanitary conditions.

In her argument for the bill, Mrs. Frederick said it was admitted that all prices tend to drift downward from time to time. This makes it difficult for the manufacturer to maintain his price.

"The bill will help the consumer to maintain his price," she asserted.

"When you buy a garment, you buy it for the sake of its wearability," she declared.

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